

Democrats believe in cutting taxes—not for chief executive officers of these big companies, not for oil men, but for middle-class families who need help the most.

Mr. President, I have already talked about the two men who are going to manage this bill: Chairman CONRAD and ranking member JUDD GREGG. They really do good work. Now it is up to the full Senate to follow Senator CONRAD's lead, and that of Senator JUDD GREGG, to move forward and get a budget that can be the blueprint for what we do the rest of this Congress.

I look forward to an open, productive budget debate this week. I hope that with the kind of steely resolve President Roosevelt showed, we can put the failed Bush economic policies behind us and pass a fair, responsible budget that makes America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

PEACE CORPS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I had the good fortune to meet earlier today with the head of the Peace Corps. His name is Ron Tschetter—a wonderful man who was approved overwhelmingly not that long ago by the full Senate.

The Peace Corps is one of the programs that is so good for this country and the world. We have a little over 8,000 Peace Corps volunteers. We should have twice as many. The President said a couple years ago he was going to double the Peace Corps from 7,000 to 14,000. That has not happened. He has increased it by a few hundred, and that is very, very important. From Nevada, we have 22 Peace Corps volunteers out of the 8,000. They are from all over the world.

As I have had the good fortune of being able to travel as a representative of our country around the world over the last several decades, every place I go, I visit with Peace Corps volunteers because there is no group of individuals that does more for our country in setting good, high-quality standards than the Peace Corps volunteers. They do great work, and I am very proud of them.

These Peace Corps volunteers, when they are interviewed, are not Democrats or Republicans, they are Americans, and they do great public service. They are true public servants, and I am very proud of the work they have done and will continue to do throughout the world on behalf of America.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

BUDGET WEEK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week our friends on the other side pulled back the curtain on their budget

proposal, and taxpayers all across America groaned. It really was not very pretty. The Democrats propose to increase discretionary spending above the \$1 trillion mark for the first time ever. To pay for it, they want to increase taxes by a lot—the largest tax hike in history.

The timing, of course, could not be worse. At a time when Americans are seeing record gas prices, falling home values, and higher health care and tuition costs, the other side sees higher taxes and more spending. Rather than offer a plan to address the concerns of the day, they offer a plan to make those costs harder to meet inside the limits of a family budget. At a time of heightened economic worry, our friends' plan for America is for families to keep less of their money and they insist that Government spend more.

The effect of all this on U.S. families would be crushing. Under the Democratic budget, the average American family would see their annual tax bill go up by \$2,300 a year. Nearly 20 million seniors would see their taxes go up by more than \$2,000 a year. And 8 million low-income workers would be added to the tax roles.

At a time of increased economic concern, Democrats want the average American family to have \$2,300 less for the family budget under their plan. That is enough money to pay for an entire year's worth of gas for two cars. It is about what the average American family with two kids spends on health care in 9 months. It is also enough to buy 8 months' worth of groceries.

The average American family would suffer a lot under this plan. Consider a family in Kentucky that is just starting to think about college for a new baby. If that family took the \$2,300 Democrats are asking for in new taxes and invested it each year in a tax-free college savings account, they would have nearly \$75,000 for college by the time that child was ready to attend school.

This budget is not the answer Americans have been looking for. It is a cliché. When faced with a challenge, Democrats always answer with a simple three-word response: tax and spend. And this year is certainly no different.

American families and their children are the ones who will lose out under this tax-and-spend plan. Democrats promise to pay for everything but make families pay instead. They promised middle-class tax relief last year but did nothing to enact it. They promise to reduce the debt but increase it instead. And they promise to address long-term entitlement spending but only make the problem worse with higher taxes and more spending.

Over the last 25 years, Republican economic policies have lifted tens of millions of working families into the middle class. We did it through lower taxes, controlled spending, and keeping our defenses strong. Democrats know these policies worked. That is why, as we began this Congress, many Demo-

crats assured voters they would not raise taxes on working-class and middle-class voters. Well, this budget certainly fell short of that mark.

The proposed tax hike the Democrats sent down last week is four times bigger than the one in 1993 that even President Clinton said was too big for Americans and, ultimately, even for him. How can Democrats think the American people will accept this one? Do they think Americans want to see the gains of the last 6 years washed away by a budget that reinstates every tax we have lowered or repealed over that period?

Budget week is always a clarifying time of year on Capitol Hill. What the other side's budget makes clear once again is that our friends on the other side are more concerned about growing the size and scope of Washington spending, while we want to grow the family's budget. At a time of great economic uncertainty, Americans expect more from Government than a \$1.2 trillion tax hike and billions of dollars in new spending.

This budget spends more than \$775 billion from the Social Security surplus. It increases gross debt by more than \$2 trillion. It increases the deficit by almost \$400 billion. And it completely ignores the question of where we are going to get the money to pay for \$66 trillion in promised entitlements—this despite the fact that the Democratic chairman of the Budget Committee has explicitly said we need to reform entitlement programs.

Republicans made a pledge last year to fight tax increases and to rein in spending. We stuck by that pledge last year. In these difficult economic times, we will certainly stick by it this year. With this budget, Democrats want to spend more from Washington and raise your taxes to pay for it. I, for one, will vote to allow families to keep more of what they earn so they can decide how to spend it.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL GARY BRENT COLEMAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of a soldier who gave his life in defense of his country. CPL Gary Brent Coleman of Pikeville, KY, perished on November 21, 2003, in Balad, Iraq, when his vehicle overturned mid-chase during combat operations. He was 24 years old.

The memorial service for Corporal Coleman was so large it filled the auditorium of his alma mater, Pikeville High School. Brent, as he was known, had been a local hero for his prowess on the football field. He became an even greater hero by stepping forward in a time of war.

Friends, family members and fellow soldiers spoke, one after another, on the effect Brent had had in their lives. When it was over, Brent's father, Gary Keene Coleman, said, "I was . . . proud that Brent had made that type of an impact on so many people. But I would rather for him to be here."